## ON THE GEOMETRICAL PERIOD OF ENGLISH CHURCH ARCHITECTURE.
### A.D. 1245—A.D. 1315.

SECTION I.—*Present Nomenclature and Classification of Pointed Style.*—We have been so long accustomed to speak of our national architecture in the terms and according to the classsification bequeathed to us by Mr. Rickman, and those terms and that classification are so well understood, and have been so universally adopted, that any proposal to supersede the one or to modify the other requires somewhat more than a mere apology. To disturb a nomenclature of long standing, to set aside terms in familiar use, and to set up others in their place, which are strange, and therefore at first unintelligible, involves an interruption of that facility with which we are accustomed to communicate with one another on any given subject, that is only to be justified by reasons of a cogent and satisfactory nature.

The sufficiency of Mr. Rickman's nomenclature and divisions, and their suitableness at the time, and for the purpose, for which they were made, are best evidenced by the fact, that although the attempts to supersede them have been both numerous and persevering, they have remained for nearly half a century the principal guide to the architectural student, and Mr. Rickman's Attempt to discriminate the styles of architecture in England, is still the text-book from which the greater part of the popular works of the present day have been compiled.

On referring, however, to these attempts to supersede Mr. Rickman's system, it is proper to remark that one observation applies to the whole of them: although they propose to change the nomenclature of his different styles or to subdivide them, his main division of English architecture into four great periods or styles is adopted by all, and still remains undisturbed. No point, therefore, has been hitherto proposed to be gained by these alterations, beyond a change of name; and this may be taken as a sufficient reason why none of these attempts have been successful: men are not willing to unlearn a term with which they are familiar, however inappropiate, in order to learn another, which after all means the same thing.

Although, however, Mr. Rickman's simple division of church architecture into four periods or styles may perhaps have been the one best suited to his time, and to the elementary state of the knowledge of the subject possessed by the best informed archæologists of his day, it may with propriety be questioned how far such a division is suited to the exigencies of writers of the present day, or to the present advanced state of knowledge on the subject.

It is now beginning to be generally admitted that church architecture from the earliest periods down to the seventeenth century, was in a state of regular and constant progress or transition; any division of it, therefore, into any given number of styles or periods, must be looked upon necessarily as an arbitrary one.

That Mr. Rickman was aware of this there can be little doubt, and in determining to adopt a simple division and four styles, rather than a complicated one and a greater number, he has no doubt succeeded in rendering the subject attractive and intelligible to very many who might otherwise have been deterred from engaging in it.

This is a recommendation, however, which can hardly be said to hold good at the present day: it behoves us to consider well, perhaps more especially at the present moment,—so great an impulse having been recently given to the study of church architecture,—whether Mr. Rickman's system fulfils all the conditions essential to one calculated for popular and universal use, and whether we should therefore seek to confirm, and to perpetuate it, or whether the time has not arrived for the adoption of a more detailed and accurate division, of the long and noble series of buildings which contain the history of our national architecture from the Heptarchy to the Reformation.

A question of this kind forms the subject of a little work which is now in the press, in which I have ventured to recommend a nomenclature and a classification differing somewhat from that of Mr. Rickman, and a division of church architecture into *seven* periods instead of *four*. The object of the present paper is more particularly to describe and to illustrate one of those periods, which, for reasons that will be obvious to many of my readers, and which can be made, I think, intelligible to all, I propose to call the Geometrical Period of English Church Architecture; and I have selected this for present consideration, because I conceive that no county possesses, in greater abundance, the materials necessary to illustrate and define it than Lincoln; and that no building in the kingdom contains a nobler example of it than Lincoln Cathedral.

SECTION II.—*Proposed Alteration of Nomenclature and Classification.*—In Mr. Rickman's simple classification, his Norman style comprises the whole of those buildings in which the circular arch was used, whilst those in which the pointed arch was employed were divided into three styles or classes—namely, the early English, the decorated, and the perpendicular. The titles of the two last-mentioned, namely, the decorated and the perpendicular, Mr. Rickman professed to derive from the character of their windows, conceiving, no doubt justly, that no part of a building exhibits peculiarities of style in so prominent and characteristic a manner as its windows. In strict accordance with this rule, which may be assumed to be a correct and valuable one, I propose to shew that had Mr. Rickman gone a step further, and classed the whole of the buildings of pointed architecture according to the forms of their windows, under four heads instead of three, he would have obtained a classification equally simple, but more intelligible and convenient,—he would have obviated much that is confused and indefinite, and therefore perplexing to the architectural student, in his description of buildings, such as those we are about to refer to,—and would have enabled us to compare the buildings of our own country with those of corresponding character and nearly contemporaneous date on the Continent, in a manner that would have established an analogy between them, which, according to the present classification, has no apparent existence.

Every one who is acquainted with Mr. Rickman's descriptions of the buildings of the early English style is aware that he did not limit the buildings of that period to those in which the lancet window only appears, but included many others in which windows occur of many lights, containing heads filled with tracery, consisting of foliated circles, and other simple geometrical figures. In thus admitting traceried windows, of whatever kind, within the category of early English work, he appears to have had some difficulty occasionally in his descriptions, and to have been at a loss, in fact, to know where to draw the line between early English and decorated work. Thus, in speaking of the presbytery of Lincoln Cathedral, he describes it as a "sort of transition to the decorated style," and of many other similar buildings, which may be ranked as amongst the finest in the kingdom, as belonging to the same class.

Again, no one who has paid much attention to the buildings of the decorated style, or who has consulted the descriptions of such buildings given in Mr. Rickman's Appendix, can fail to have observed that the windows of this style are divisible into two classes,—one in which the leading lines of the tracery are of simple *geometrical*, and the other in which they are of *flowing* character. Nor is this distinction the only one which exists between these two classes of windows. We shall find, if we examine further, that they differ also materially in other respects—in their mouldings and plan, as well as in their sculpture and ornaments. We shall find, in fact, whether we consider their general design or their detail, that the points of difference which distinguish perpendicular windows from decorated windows are not greater than those which separate these two classes of decorated windows from one another. We have only to carry our inquiries a step further in order to satisfy ourselves that these points of difference are not confined to the windows alone, but extend also to the buildings to which those windows respectively belong; and having arrived at this point, we shall not be long in coming to the conclusion that there exists a large and important class of buildings, characterised by the geometrical forms of their window tracery, which has hitherto been treated as belonging partly to the early English, and partly to the decorated styles, but which is in reality distinct from both, and pre-eminently entitled, from the number and beauty of its examples, to separate classification.

To this class of buildings, then, I propose to assign a period embracing the latter portion of Mr. Rickman's early English period, and the earlier part of his decorated period, commencing at the point where tracery properly so called began to be used, and terminating at the point where the leading lines of that tracery began to be no longer circular, but flowing. Supposing this period to be adopted as that of a distinct style, we then have the buildings of pointed architecture, divided into four classes, which are characterised by their windows, and therefore easily distinguished. We have, first, those in which the lancet window only appears; secondly, those which contain windows having simple geometrical tracery; thirdly, those which have windows of flowing tracery; and, fourthly, those in which the leading lines of the window tracery are vertical and horizontal.

To designate any of these periods, except the last, by any of the terms hitherto in use, appears to be objectionable, as tending probably to cause confusion and misapprehension; and to retain the last, if the others be abandoned, and a better and more appropriate term can be found, appears to be still less desirable. At the same time it is much to be preferred that the terms we use should not be altogether strange, and if possible self-explanatory. These two conditions are such as to render it difficult to find terms such as to be in all respects perfectly satisfactory, and perhaps no system of nomenclature could be found so perfect as to be entirely free from objection. Until, however, a better be suggested, I propose to denominate these four periods as follows:—1. The Lancet Period. 2. The Geometrical Period. 3. The Curvilinear Period. 4. The Rectilinear Period.

In thus adopting the term *geometrical*, I should wish to be understood as using it in the conventional sense in which it has been applied by Mr. Rickman and his followers, and understood by all archæologists of the present day; and the term *curvilinear*, as conveying more satisfactorily perhaps than any other word, the undulating form both of the tracery and mouldings of this period, in which the curve of contrary flexure, or the ogee, as it is commonly called, is the characteristic feature. It remains still for me to fix the limits in point of time to be assigned to each of the periods.

Mr. Rickman commenced his early English period with the year of our Lord 1189, and ended it in the year 1307; whilst his decorated period commences A. D. 1307, and terminates A. D. 1377; or, in other words, he made his early English style coincident with the reigns of Richard I., John, Henry III., and Edward I., and his decorated style with those of Edward II. and Edward III. It is clear that an objection may be taken to this mode of making the duration of a style coincident with the life of a monarch,—the death of the one having not the remotest connection with the close of the other. Their dates, therefore, are not to be looked upon as precisely and historically fixed by any particular architectural fact, but as indicating simply the time about which the style became changed. A preferable course appears to be to fix the commencement of a style by one or more examples of sufficient importance, and of well-authenticated date; or where this is impossible, to fix it by the collective testimony afforded by buildings of authentic date, somewhat earlier and somewhat later than that of the supposed change.

In this manner, and upon evidence of this kind, I propose to fix the commencement of the lancet period at or about the year of our lord 1190; that of the geometrical period at or about the year 1245; that of the curvilinear period at or about the year 1315; and that of the rectilinear period at or about the year 1360.

SECTION III.—*Duration of the Geometrical Period.*—It will be seen that I assume a period of 70 years to be the duration of the geometrical style, whilst to the lancet I assign a

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